Metronome

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Metronome

by hartfeathers

Summary

He hangs up his coat and toes off his shoes, he can hear the slight rustle of paper from the lounge indicating Hannibal is sitting at his harpsichord. Will follows the sound and leans against the wall as he watches Hannibal scribble down notes and rearrange his sheets of music. The whole scene is entirely domestic, something Will never hoped he and Hannibal would have. He has never felt this content.

Then the ticking starts.

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Prompt - Metronome

Notes

Hannibal Bingo Fill: Prompt - Metronome

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I don't claim to know about PTSD or the treatment of it, hopefully just enough to have written this fic in a realistic and respectful way, while inside the context of the show and Will. This is based of my knowledge of Will and his experiences with remembering specific memories.

Will's way of coping is not healthy but in the world of Hannibal I think it makes sense for him, especially when the memories are so painful and the trigger is something that he is not realistically going to come into contact with again.

The whole idea of this fic was to address that Will does have these traumatic memories that would crop up at some point, and how he may deal (or not deal) with that.

It is never my intention to be disrespectful or cause harm, I hope that I have been able to write this in a sensitive way and it isn't distressing to anyone who decides to read it.

See the end of the work for more notes
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Will walks into the house, Winston trailing behind him happy and relaxed after a long walk. He smiles faintly as he watches his companion wander off, no doubt to find a place to nap. He hangs up his coat and toes off his shoes, he can hear the slight rustle of paper from the lounge indicating Hannibal is sitting at his harpsichord. Will follows the sound and leans against the wall as he watches Hannibal scribble down notes and rearrange his sheets of music. The whole scene is entirely domestic, something Will never hoped he and Hannibal would have. He has never felt this content.

Then the ticking starts.

Just the sound of the first click causes him to freeze, dread racing down his spine making his heart pound. As the dull, rhythmic ticking continues his breath labours and his hands clench so tightly his skin turns white. His vision blurs, melting and swirling in a way that is terrifyingly familiar and suddenly he isn't in their little Cuban house near the beach anymore. He's in Baltimore, lax in a leather chair sweating and panting as Hannibal speaks to him in a soothing tone as he presses a needle to his skin, surrounded by flashing lights and the constant click of the metronome.

"Will?... Will!" The sound of Hannibal’s voice drags him from the scene, slow and pulling as if walking through honey.

He finally settles back into his own skin again, reorientating in the room and feels the sensation of suffocating. He realises Hannibal is cupping his face in his large hands, the heat of him making Will's already overheated skin clammy. Those deep amber eyes are full of concern but Hannibal is too close, the touch is too much, suffocating and smothering, clouding his already overwhelmed senses.

He jerks himself out of Hannibal’s hold and reels backwards, before he can process his actions he is across the room and the metronome lays splintered but blessedly silent on the floor. He pants heavily as he tries to calm his panicked heart.

"Will?"

He screws his eyes shut and shakes his head, he can't hear Hannibal’s voice right now because it reverberates in his mind with words he spoke a lifetime ago.

Instead he edges around the room, needing to flee, to shut himself away in solitude so he can ground himself again. He points to the cursed object, "Get that out of this house, Hannibal. Today."

He waits just long enough to catch Hannibal nod out of the corner of his eye, then he's gone.

Hannibal is stunned in the wake of Will's departure, he is mildly hurt by Will's vehement withdrawal from him, the rejection of his touch. The bitter scent of fear lingers heavily in the air but it's stale, a past fear remembered and relived.

He looks at the now broken metronome on the floor and feels the rare sting of regret, it's obvious which memories Will was reliving, which fears. He did not predict that Will would have such a reaction after all this time and finds himself berating the oversight.

He picks up the splintered thing and while it was a lovely antique he doesn't feel remorse for its demise.

For the next few days Will is quiet and reserved, evasive and elusive. Hannibal tries to initiate conversation on the first day but Will's vehement silence, and flinching from Hannibal’s attempt at touch, tells him everything he needs to know - Will needs time. He needs time to process not only his reaction but to work through his feelings regarding the memory and decide how he wants to move forward.

Hannibal doesn't push, he knows that any interference from him now would only result in Will retreating from him further. So he cooks, and draws, and reads - he doesn't touch his harpsichord, fearing causing a relapse - and waits.

On the fourth morning Hannibal wakes to find Will making crepes for breakfast, throwing Hannibal a small, shy smile over his shoulder, making Hannibal’s heart skip a beat. They eat in companionable silence, the heavy weight from the past days seeming lighter and less intense.

It's only once Hannibal has turned his back to wash the dishes that Will speaks, "I came to terms with what you did to me a long time ago, Hannibal." He sighs deeply and Hannibal tilts his head to see Will bowing his head to run a hand through his hair. "I remember what you did, some of it anyway… enough. And I know why. I accepted it and moved past it. But I can't forget it and part of me will never forgive you for it, the same part of me that can't forgive you for Georgia, Beverly and… and Abigail." Will pauses, his voice rough with emotion. "I understand why you did those things Hannibal, but I can't change how I feel. When I heard that metronome it was like I was back in that chair. I felt confused and scared and out of control - I felt vulnerable and weak in the worst way. And I couldn't control it, I couldn't stop the memories. I couldn't stop reliving it. Even after the sound stopped the memories and sensations lingered in my body for hours afterwards. I had a fevered nightmare for the first time in months."

Hannibal feels desperate to offer comfort, to soothe Will's frayed nerves but he knows he can't, not right now. He needs to wait until Will has finished because if Hannibal spooks him now, they may never have this conversation, which obviously needs to happen. So he listens.

"I understand Hannibal, and I don't think about that anymore, I don't want to think about it. It happened, I accept it happened and I've moved on. I can't go back to that mindset again, I can't be in that space. I'll drown." Will finally raises his head and looks Hannibal in the eye, he can see the pain in those deep blue eyes. "If I have to keep going back to that time, how it made me feel, how it felt when I remembered them the first time in the BSHCI… I'll break. It will break us. And I don't want that. After everything we have been through and done, and survived, to finally be here, to finally be happy, together. I don't want to lose that, to lose you."

Hannibal moves closer in an attempt to offer comfort without being overbearing. "We could try exposure therapy? Slowly associate the metronome with good things?"

"No." Will answers quick and short. He looks at Hannibal, apologetic but determined. "That sound is too ingrained into negative memories - of being drugged, of being used and manipulated. They are too painful and they blend together with the BSHCI… they are too twisted and scarred. I just want to forget." Will's voice is tinged with longing and need." I just want to forget again, Hannibal."

"Alright, Will." The relieved smile he gets in return is worth everything. Hannibal regrets that his actions have caused such ugly scars on Will's psyche and he is more thankful than ever that Will's forgiveness and love is able to override the worst injuries they have inflicted upon one another.

Will reaches out, tentative and unsure, and Hannibal immediately takes his hand, relieved and overjoyed to finally be able to touch his beloved again. Hannibal, happily, allows himself to be pulled against Will, pressing their foreheads together and just breathing, basking in the reassurance of touch.

There are moments in their past that neither of them will completely forget, or forgive, but their love is stronger than the pain they've caused each other.

Hannibal makes sure that there is never a metronome in their home again.

End Notes

Lisa, thank you so much for your encouragment and support, it really gave me the courage to post this ❤️

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